

Building Relationships for Stronger Families

The Bi-Borough Parenting Strategy



Building Relationships for Stronger Families; the Bi-borough strategic framework for parenting

1. Introduction & Vision

This strategic framework introduces the vision and priorities for parent interventions across the Bi-borough. At the heart of the strategy, is our aim to support families to develop healthy attachments, positive communication and resilient children and parents. The early identification and early provision of help is in the best interest of children; providing timely support for families is vital for children's well-being¹ educational attainment and life chances². This framework sets out our aim to provide appropriate parenting support, at the earliest opportunity for the benefit of the families of The Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea (RBKC) and Westminster City Council (WCC).

Families come in all shapes and sizes, from different backgrounds, cultures and with different life experiences. Whether separated or together, we want to offer *all* parents -but particularly those with the greatest need- timely, effective support, so they can provide the kind of family environment where their children thrive. Evidence suggests that the quality of relationship *between* parents has a significant influence on their parenting, as well as children's long-term mental health and future life chances². Consequently, this strategy incorporates and integrates the vision for parent relationships and parenting support together, as both are key to improving family lives.

Like families, parenting interventions come in many shapes and forms. This strategy focusses primarily on evidence-based programmes (and groups) delivered in a *group* format. However, with a growing trend towards support online, the strategy also seeks to embrace these newer methods and test their application within the Bi-borough. Moreover, evidence suggests that parents *most* in need of parenting interventions, are most impacted by barriers and factors such as venue, times and the lack of an initial relationship to the facilitator³. To provide a responsive, forward thinking offer, local areas should balance evidence-based interventions alongside testing new or innovative approaches to ensure their provision fits local capability and context⁴. Therefore, by introducing new approaches such as supporting ongoing casework with an evidence-based on-line programme, or training lead professionals to deliver a parenting intervention 1:1 as part of the family plan, we hope the application of evidence-based programmes grows but we also learn 'what works' for families in our Bi-borough.

¹ Munro, E. (2011). The Munro Review of Child Protection: Final Report. A child-centred system. London: Department for Education. DoH

² Harold, G., Acquah, D., Sellers, R., & Chowdry, H. (2016) What works to enhance inter-parental relationships and improve outcomes for children. DWP ad hoc research report no. 32. London: DWP

³ Pote I et al. (2019) Engaging disadvantaged and vulnerable parents: an evidence review, Early Intervention Foundation <https://www.eif.org.uk/report/engaging-disadvantaged-and-vulnerable-parents-an-evidence-review>

⁴ Asmussen, K., Waddell, S., Molloy, D. and Chowdry, H. (2017) Commissioning parenting and family support for troubled families - Early Intervention Foundation <https://www.eif.org.uk/files/pdf/commissioning-parenting-family-support-troubled-families.pdf>

2. The Bi-borough Context

The Building Relationships for Stronger Families Bi-borough framework sits as an addendum to the RBKC and WCC Early Help Strategies⁵. It reinforces the vision and mission set out in these documents but charts the ambition of the Bi-borough parenting professionals on how they intend to contribute to these aims in relation to parent groups and programmes.

Following the reorganisation of the Early Help targeted services in WCC and RBKC (2016 & 2019 respectively) the parenting offer has also been redefined. Arrangements within each of the boroughs remain self-directed and self-governed, and this strategy provides the basis for how both councils will collaborate with each other and with its partners, to deliver a whole-systems approach to Early Help parenting interventions.

This framework acknowledges the local contexts of both RBKC & WCC (delineated in detail within each of the Early Help strategies) and seeks to provide a 'vision for parenting' which is responsive to local need. Moreover, the strategy also considers the national context including the drive towards improving the relationships *between* parents, to improve: outcomes for children, the effectiveness of parenting interventions and reduce parental conflict⁶.

To realise our aspiration of a whole-systems approach for WCC & RBKC Parenting, Early Help will need to collaborate with partners within our council services and within our local communities, including commissioned services. The introduction of the Westminster Parenting Forum (in 2018) has been instrumental in bringing together key stakeholders who either deliver parenting programmes or have a vested interest. To oversee the implementation of this strategy in RBKC we will introduce a Parenting Forum to replicate the Westminster approach and will in the future, consider whether it would be advantageous to move towards a Bi-borough Parenting Forum.

Whilst it is beyond the scope of this framework to develop the strategy for the parenting offer provided by Children and Family Services for the more acute or complex family needs- such as those on the edge of care- we recognise that professionals working in these contexts may find the groups and programmes on offer, a suitable addition to *or step down from*, the work they are currently undertaking. We are committed to working within the wider professional team and will develop processes to support those families with the greatest of need, to access parenting groups and programmes in whichever form best suits their circumstances – be that with their caseworker, in a group, or online.

3. Our Vision for Parents

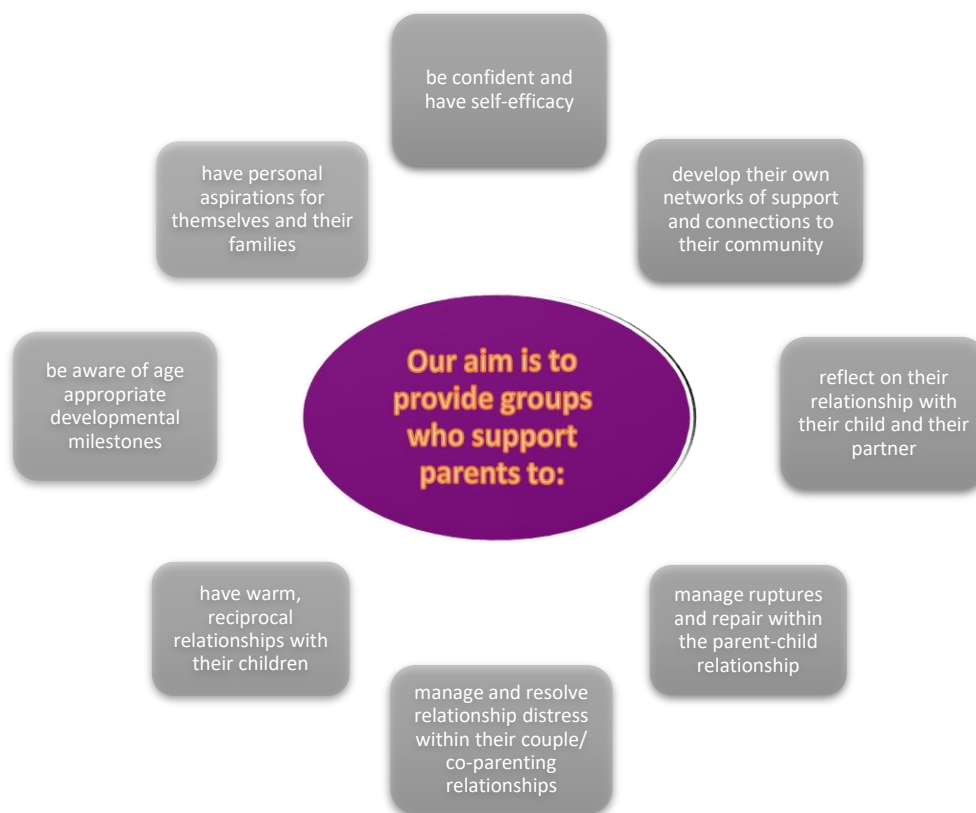
Evidence suggests that when parents receive timely, responsive parenting support, outcomes for children improve. We believe there are key parental behaviours and functions that we aspire to improve through the delivery of our groups & programmes.

⁵ From Surviving to Thriving, IT STARTS WITH US. Early Help Strategy 2019 – 2022, Westminster City Council https://www.westminster.gov.uk/sites/default/files/early_help_strategy_2019_2022.pdf

⁶ Harold, G., Acquah, D., Sellers, R., & Chowdry, H. (2016) What works to enhance inter-parental relationships and improve outcomes for children. DWP ad hoc research report no. 32. London: DWP

Our aim is to provide groups which support parents to be:

- Parents who are confident and have self-efficacy
- Parents who have a network of support and connected to their community
- Parents who reflect on their relationship with their child and their partner
- Parents who can manage ruptures and repair within the parent-child relationship
- Parents who have warm, reciprocal relationships with their children
- Parents who can manage and resolve relationship distress within their couple/ co-parenting relationships
- Parents who are aware of age appropriate developmental milestones
- Parents who have personal aspirations for themselves and their families



4. Thresholds of Need

The range of groups and evidence-based programmes offered across the bi-borough, and in conjunction with our partners, provides a varied and accessible offer to parents. One of the aims of this strategy is to highlight which groups and programmes are best suited to different levels of need so that parents are referred to the programmes that 'best fit' the kinds of challenges that their families are facing. Whilst we will continue to empower parents to make *choices* about their lives, we want to help both parents and professionals navigate the array of programmes on offer to find the right course at the right time, for support to be most effective. Below is a diagram which provides a snapshot of some of the current programmes available across the bi-borough, identifying the ages and family circumstances these groups are targeting:

Key						
<p>Red: Group open to all parents</p> <p>Green: Group suitable for parents in a couple relationship</p> <p>Blue- Group for parents who are separated</p>	0 – 12 years	Circle of Security	Triple P 0-12	Strengthening Families Strengthening Communities	Parents as Partners	Triple P Enhanced (1:1 parenting support)
		Family Check-up (1:1 Parenting Support)	Within My Reach	Triple P Stepping Stones (for parents with children with SEND)	Triple P Foundations (currently offered on a 1:1 basis)	
	12 years +	Triple P Teen	Circle of Security for Teens	NVR parents group (Non-violent resistance)	NVR parents group (Non-violent resistance)	Triple P Foundations (currently offered on a 1:1 basis)
					Triple P Enhanced (1:1 parenting support)	
		Targeted			Intensive	

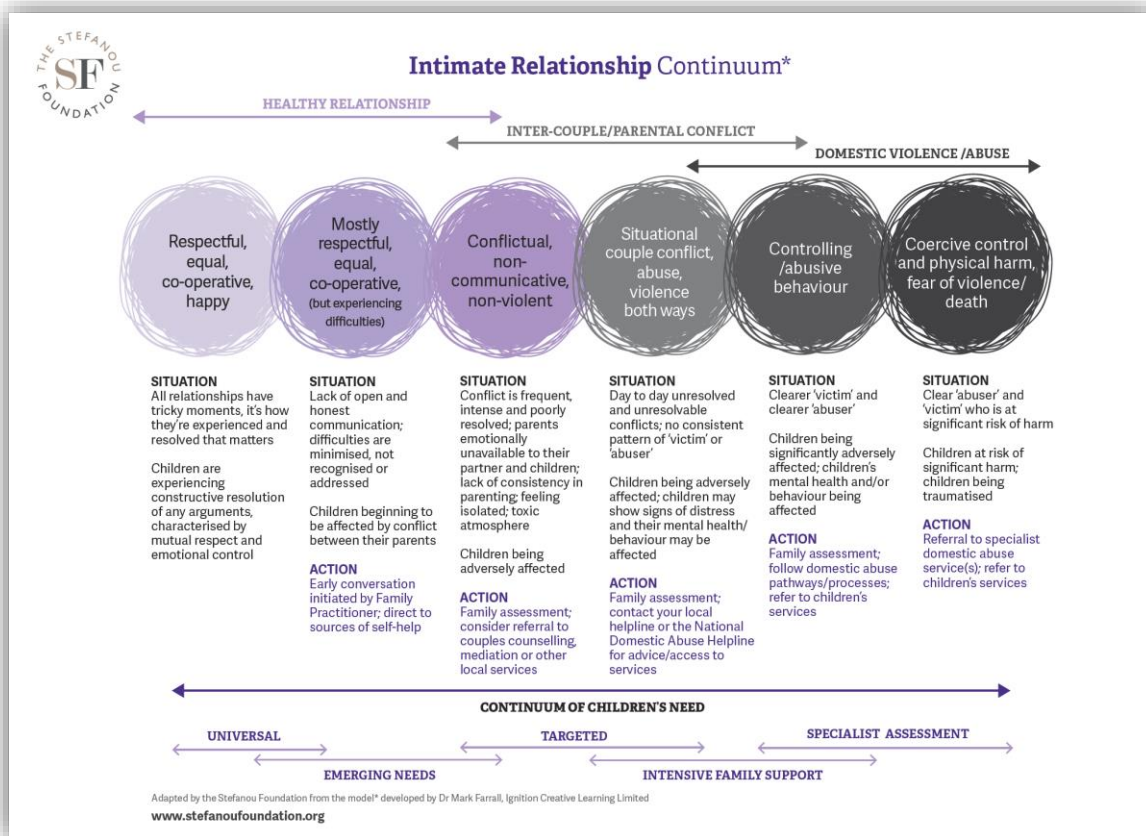
5. Parenting Teenagers

There is a common misconception that parenting groups are for the parents of young children. This strategy recognises that parenting programmes can be needed at all ages and stages of family life, including periods of transition such as when a child moves to secondary school or periods of emotional challenge within a family; such events can understandably impact relationships. As children gain independence this can increase tensions at home⁷, new strategies may be needed in order to maintain a loving connection with our children while we provide consistent boundaries and care that keeps them safe. Within the Bi-borough we are committed to providing programmes which specifically support parenting teens, including parents whose young people may be considered vulnerable to engaging in serious youth violence or becoming exploited. Training that we provide, such as Non-violent Resistance or Trauma Informed Practice, will assist our frontline practitioners to deliver successful 1:1 parenting interventions with the parents that they work with.

6. Working with Couples or Co-parents

We are committed to working with key adults within a family as we believe that improving relationships between couples/ co-parents (as well as the parent – child relationship) will improve the long-term life chances of our children and young people (CYP). To gain a greater understanding of the relationship quality *between* parents and identify suitable support options when necessary, we use guidance such as the Intimate Relationship Continuum (see below & appendix i). This tool can assist in determining the level of conflict within a relationship and whether a parental conflict pathway of support is most appropriate. Moreover, we aim to identify these families at the earliest point, including during pregnancy and the post-natal period.

⁷ Moretti, M. & Peled M. (2004) Adolescent-parent attachment; bonds that support healthy attachment. Paediatrics & Child Health <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2724162/>



Notably, this strategy highlights the offer for inter-couple/ parental conflict support only. Parents identified as experiencing domestic violence or abuse should follow local safeguarding procedures as usual and attend the specialist support interventions on offer ⁸.

The Child Arrangement Programme report⁹, published by the private law working group, suggests that over 20% of cases involving children should have been resolved without court intervention. The report also highlights that public funding for mediation between parents has fallen by over a half since 2014 and that there is poor-quality signposting of services for families in need of parental conflict support. While it is beyond the scope of Bi-borough Parenting to provide mediation for parents in dispute, we recognise that access to good-quality, evidenced based parenting interventions, for families whose parents are separated, will help to avoid court in some cases. Where mediation between parents is deemed necessary, we will aim to have strong links with these services and will ensure that we promote these referral pathways alongside our parental conflict parenting interventions.

A new referral process is being developed to help match parents to the right support, including identifying other key adults within the children's lives whom could benefit from attending a parenting or relationship-based group or programme.

⁸ Local Safeguarding Children Board <https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/lscb/information-parents-carers-and-public>

⁹ A Review of the Child Arrangement Programme; private law working group report (2019) <https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Private-Law-Working-Group-Review-of-the-CAP-June-2019.pdf>

7. Early and Alternative Approaches

Standardised parenting groups and programmes are not the only method that we utilise to support parenting. Family hubs and children's centres play a key role in early identification, providing informal targeted approaches to support local parents. Stay & play sessions, coffee mornings, parent discussion groups etc. often provide invaluable opportunities for both professionals and other parents to share experiences, values, and tips with one another. Moreover, specialist groups and programmes such as the Freedom Programme and KidsTime, which support to women who have experienced domestic abuse and families whose parent has a mental health illness respectively, play a key role in improving the lives of families across the Bi-borough; through the parenting forum we will engage with key stakeholders for these settings and groups to ensure that we adopt an effective, whole-systems approach to improving relationships within the family.

8. Aims of the Bi-borough Strategy

These aims set the landscape in which our strategy will be delivered:

- **Maximise the resources across WCC and RBKC Parenting by working collaboratively to better serve our residents;** the strategy, written by Bridie Collins (Westminster's Strategic Lead for Parenting and Reducing Parental Conflict), will be implemented in each borough individually but overseen by the respective Early Help Partnership Boards.
- **Implement a co-ordinated partnership with those who deliver or refer to parenting programmes;** RBKC will follow Westminster's model and introduce an RBKC based Parenting Forum which brings together key partners and stakeholders bi-monthly, to co-ordinate, support and develop the offer of parenting programmes and groups.
- **Co-ordinate and integrate the Reducing Parental Conflict (RPC) agenda;** both RBKC and Westminster are committed partners of the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) to test and embed new approaches to RPC. Both RBKC & WCC have also obtained funding to develop the strategic support of leaders and key decision makers and the training of frontline practitioners, managers and partners. An annual RPC action plan has been formed (appendix) and will be overseen by a strategic steering group.
- **Introduce a robust plan-do-review cycle;** to support the on-going development of parenting programmes and groups, we need to better understand *what works* for our families and within our local contexts. An annual parenting report for both Westminster and RBKC will be shared and the findings from these plan-do-review cycles will be shared with partnership boards and steering groups where appropriate.
- **Explore opportunities** for the councils and other partners to secure funding, resources and training to increase local delivery capacity.

9. Priorities of our Bi-borough Parenting Strategy

Through the analysis of local plans, local aspirations and local data, this strategy identifies 13 key priorities, and these are as follows:

Interventions & Delivery

- Work with partners to provide a co-ordinated and varied programme of parenting interventions for families with children aged 0-19, which is responsive to local need
- Successfully integrate the relationship/ co-parenting support into the Bi-borough parenting offer
- Parenting interventions are perceived as less mother-centric and become accessed by a more diverse range of family members that make up our families, especially fathers
- Test new ways to provide evidence-based parenting programmes such as online courses and/ or with lead professional support
- Parenting offer considers key transition points and milestones such as pregnancy, early parenthood, school transitions, divorce etc.
- Better use of technology and access to self-help advice
- Close partnership with the Bi-borough Short Breaks team to deliver SEN(D) parenting programmes which provide more specialised advice and support to parents pre/ post SEN(D) diagnosis

Process & Quality Assurance

- Implement a referral process and framework which supports Children's Services parenting lead's
- to identify the most suitable evidenced-based programmes for parents referred to council run services
- Introduce improved measurement tools (and practices) across programmes, which are useful to parents, practitioners and reporting functions
- Assist council commissioners to make informed decisions about what and how they commission
- Introduce robust quality assurance procedures
- Integrate the parenting offer into family plans and 'team around the family' providing regular feedback to referrers

Programme Development & Accessibility

- Involve parents in the design and delivery of parenting groups and programmes so they can share their learning and support other parents within our communities
- Improve the 'visibility' of parenting groups and programmes, normalising the uptake of support
- Consider the impact that parental mental health will have on the accessibility and uptake of parenting groups and programmes
- Make good links with CYP services, including schools and youth clubs, who have an important part to play in promoting the offer to the families they work with
- Form close working relationships with housing, employment and health to ensure that referral pathways are clear and responsive to the needs of families accessing these services

Workforce Development

- Support our workforce to develop skills to identify, refer and support families in need of parenting and/ or relationship support, both group and 1:1.
- Practitioners share current information and guidelines with group attendees (and where appropriate invite local speakers) on topics such as child development, healthy eating, oral hygiene, online safety, school attendance, serious youth violence and employment & training
- Ensure delivery practitioners have appropriate knowledge and training in supporting parents with mental health issues
- Provide training to practitioners, such as Non-violent Resistance training, which supports them to work effectively 1:1 with parents experiencing challenges, parenting their teen or young person



Parenting Groups

Intimate Relationship Continuum*

